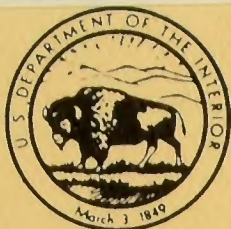




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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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Oregon State OfficeNovember 1981

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# STATELINE INTENSIVE WILDERNESS INVENTORY FINAL DECISIONS

OREGON IDAHO NEVADA UTAH



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## STATELINE INVENTORY

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed the inventory phase of the wilderness review of public lands in the Stateline area (where Idaho joins with Oregon, Nevada, and Utah).

The Stateline area inventory was not completed with the Statewide inventories for each state, due to appeals received in Idaho on all of the Idaho Stateline inventory units that were proposed for intensive inventory. Although the states adjoining Idaho released their proposed inventory decisions in the Spring of 1980, they have withheld their final decisions pending the analysis of public comments on this joint Statewide report. Comments received by the Oregon, Nevada, and Utah BLM offices during their 1980 90-day comment period on their proposed decisions were utilized to formulate the coordinated proposed decision released for public comment in April 1981.

During this latest comment period approximately 25 responses were received from individuals and a variety of organizations. The information provided on the wilderness characteristics of these areas, especially the presence or absence of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, was of great help in formulating the final decisions.

After analyzing and evaluating the comments received, this final decision has been formulated on which areas do or do not contain wilderness characteristics. The three areas which do are identified as Wilderness Study Areas to be studied through the BLM planning system with recommendations reported to Congress as to whether or not the areas are suitable for designation as wilderness.

Sincere appreciation is extended to those who have participated in this endeavor.

November 20, 1981

NOTE: This report contains the narrative summaries for only the three inventory units with public lands in Oregon. Any readers who are interested in the narrative summaries for the other stateline inventory units may obtain copies on request from the Oregon State Office, P. O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208

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Denver, CO 80225



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STATELINE  
INTENSIVE INVENTORY FINAL DECISION

Unit		Acres			Page
Name	Number	Proposed As WSA	Not Proposed As WSA	Total	
Juniper Basin <u>1</u> /	ID-16-59		15,248	15,248	13
Little Owyhee River <u>1</u> /	ID-16-48c	24,677	2,140	26,817	16
Lookout Butte	OR-3-194A		65,640	65,640	23
	ID-16-48a		39,200	39,200	
	Unit Total		104,840	104,840	
Owyhee River Canyon	OR-3-195	195,400	21,280	216,680	29
	ID-16-48b	33,700		33,700	
	Unit Total	229,100	21,280	250,380	
Oregon Butte	OR-3-159		32,440	32,440	44
	NV-020-811		10,680	10,680	
	ID-16-70e		3,400	3,400	
	Unit Total		46,520	46,520	
Cottonwood-Salmon Falls	NV-010-179		10,276	10,276	49
	ID-17-26		5,977	5,977	
	Unit Total		16,253	16,253	
Upper Little Owyhee River	NV-010-102		53,384	53,384	56
	ID-16-56a		4,309	4,309	
	Unit Total		57,693	57,693	
Jarbridge Addition <u>1</u> /	ID-17-21		5,881	5,881	61
Upper Bruneau River <u>1</u> /	ID-17-19		21,711	21,711	66
South Fork Owyhee River	ID-16-53	42,510	5,550	48,060	72
	NV-010-103A	7,842	3,500	11,342	
	NV-010-103		9,319	9,319	
	Unit Total	50,352	18,369	68,721	
Little Goose Creek	NV-010-164		8,276	8,276	80
	ID-22-1		2,325	2,325	
	UT-020-001		1,330	1,330	
	Unit Total		11,931	11,931	
TOTALS		304,129	321,866	625,995	

1/ This unit is administered entirely by Idaho BLM.

## STATE-BY-STATE SUMMARY

	Total Units	WSA Units	Acres		
			WSA	Not WSA	Total
Oregon	3	1	195,400	119,360	314,760
Idaho	11	3	100,887	105,741	206,628
Nevada	5	1	7,842	95,443	103,285
Utah	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,330</u>	<u>1,330</u>
Total	11*	3*	304,129	321,874	626,003

\*Since most units are partially in two or three of the states, this figure is not a sum of the above.



## INTRODUCTION

Contained within this report are the Bureau of Land Management's final decisions on those BLM-administered lands in the Stateline area (where Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, and Utah meet), which qualify as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) and those which do not. Note that BLM is not at this time recommending that these areas should or should not be designated wilderness by Congress. BLM has determined that three inventory units contain wilderness characteristics as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and that the others do not. The areas that meet these characteristics are proposed as WSA's and will be later studied to determine whether or not they are suitable for wilderness. Every WSA will be reviewed and acted upon by Congress after the studies are complete, whether the BLM deems them suitable for designation as wilderness or not.

These final decisions are the result of intensive inventory field work and analysis of public comment. Procedures for evaluating wilderness characteristics are noted in the BLM Wilderness Inventory Handbook, September 1978, and in Organic Act Directive 78-61, including changes 1, 2, and 3, and Instruction Memo No. 80-236.

The narratives included here are summaries of more detailed intensive inventory reports available in the BLM district offices. These summaries present a brief, overall picture of the intensive inventory decisions. For more detailed, site specific information, refer to the district files. More detailed maps and photographs are also contained in these files.

## OVERVIEW OF BLM'S WILDERNESS REVIEW PROCESS

The BLM's wilderness review process is being completed in three phases--Inventory, Study, and Reporting.

Phase I - Inventory: The inventory phase has two parts, initial and intensive. Its overall purpose is to identify those public lands having wilderness characteristics as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964.

In the Initial Inventory stage, public lands administered by the BLM which clearly and obviously did not have wilderness characteristics were identified. Existing information, such as maps and aerial photos, along with input received from the public, were utilized to make this decision. Three criteria had to be met for an area to be recommended for intensive inventory. Each area must be: (1) at least 5,000 acres in size or contiguous to a proposed or existing wilderness area, (2) roadless, and (3) substantially free of man's imprints.

In the Intensive Inventory stage, as reflected in this report, field surveys were conducted. Each area was examined to determine the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics listed in the Wilderness Act: size, naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation, and supplemental values. For an area to qualify as a Wilderness Study Area, it



must meet the size criteria, must be substantially natural and have either outstanding opportunities for solitude or outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Phase II - Study: The study phase of the wilderness review will be completed as a part of the regional comprehensive land-use plans. During each planning effort, the public will have several opportunities to comment on all resource values within a Wilderness Study Area. These comments will be considered prior to the BLM's recommendations to the President and Congress on an area's suitability or unsuitability as wilderness. This phase will begin soon.

Phase III - Reporting: Recommendations on an area's suitability or unsuitability for wilderness designation will be reported to Congress through the Secretary of the Interior and the President. Reports on all WSA's must be submitted to the President by September 21, 1991.

## DEFINITIONS

Terminology specific to the BLM Wilderness Review has evolved throughout the inventory process. To facilitate better communication, the following terms elaborate on definitions already given in the Wilderness Inventory Handbook and other guidance.

Contiguous Lands: Lands or legal subdivisions having a common boundary. Lands having only a common corner are not contiguous.

FLPMA: Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, which mandated the BLM Wilderness Review. Often referred to and pronounced "FLIPMA."

Inventory Unit: An area of public land indexed for easy reference at the start of the wilderness inventory. An official file for each unit is maintained at the BLM district office and is available for public review.

Non-Public Land Inholdings: All non-Federal lands, including state or private land located within the inventory units. These lands are not calculated in the acreage being evaluated nor are they being inventoried for wilderness characteristics.

Road: For the purposes of the BLM's wilderness inventory, the following definition applies: "The word 'roadless' refers to the absence of roads which have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road."

To clarify this definition, the following sub-definitions also apply:

"Improved and maintained" - Actions taken physically by man to keep the road open to vehicular traffic.

'Improved' does not necessarily mean formal construction.

'Maintained' does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.



"Mechanical means" - Use of hand or power machinery or tools.

"Relatively regular and continuous use" - Vehicular use which has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples are: access roads for equipment to maintain a stock water tank or other established water sources; access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities; or access roads to mining claims.

Roadless: Refers to the absence of roads which have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use.

Roadless Area: A roadless area is defined as a contiguous unit of land (irregardless of size or configuration) which lies between two or more roads and/or non-BLM lands. The key word in this definition is "contiguous." The word contiguous means being of the same boundary. Unless an inventory unit is completely dissected by the discovery of additional roads that result in the identification of two or more new roadless units under 5,000 acres, the original unit meets the definition of a contiguous roadless area.

Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation are wilderness characteristics examined in the intensive wilderness inventory. Factors contributing to opportunities for solitude are size, vegetative screening, topographic relief, vistas, and physiographic variety.

Supplemental Values: Ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value that may be present in an inventory unit. These are not necessary criteria for wilderness characteristics, as is stated in the Wilderness Act of 1964, but must be assessed during the intensive wilderness inventory.

Way: A two-wheel track created only by the passage of vehicles. A "way" is not a road.

Wilderness: The definition contained in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 is as follows: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. Wilderness is an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Wilderness Area: An area formally designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.



Wilderness Characteristics: Those characteristics of wilderness as described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act. These include size, naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined type of recreation, and supplemental values.

Wilderness Inventory: An evaluation of the public lands in the form of a written description and a map showing those lands that meet the wilderness criteria as established under Section 603(a) of FLPMA and Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act. The lands meeting the criteria will be referred to as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's). Those lands identified as not meeting wilderness criteria will be released from further wilderness consideration.

Wilderness Review: The term used to cover the inventory, study, and reporting phases of the wilderness program of the BLM.

Wilderness Study Area (WSA): A Wilderness Study Area is a contiguous roadless area over 5,000 acres in size (or of sufficient size) within which can be found apparent naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or for primitive and unconfined recreation. A WSA is merely the identification of the physical limits of the wilderness resource. No attempt is made to determine the value of the wilderness resource compared to other resource values. Because a WSA is partially defined as a roadless area, WSA boundaries may be along roads unless the inventory of the roadless unit shows a reason for adjusting away from the road due to a lack of naturalness or a clear and obvious lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

#### HOW WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS WERE EVALUATED

##### Size

" . . . has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition . . . "

- Wilderness Act of 1964

The size criteria can be satisfied for inventory units in the following situations:

- a. Roadless areas with over 5,000 acres of contiguous public lands.
- b. Any roadless island of the public lands of less than 5,000 acres.
- c. Roadless areas of less than 5,000 acres of contiguous public lands where any one of the following apply:
  - They are contiguous with lands managed by another agency which have been formally determined to have wilderness or potential wilderness values.



- The public has indicated strong support for study of a particular area of less than 5,000 acres and it is demonstrated that it is clearly and obviously of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and of a size suitable for wilderness management.
- They are contiguous with an area of less than 5,000 acres of other Federal lands administered by an agency with authority to study and preserve wilderness lands, and the combined total is 5,000 acres or more.

### Naturalness

" . . . generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable . . ."

#### - Wilderness Act of 1964

This criteria states that areas must appear to be primeval and untrammelled by man with man's developments permissible, yet substantially unnoticeable on the landscape. Acceptable imprints include fences, reservoirs, spring developments, constructed trails, bridges, fire towers, fire breaks, fire suppression facilities, pit toilets, fishery enhancement facilities, snow gauges, water quantity and quality measuring devices, and other scientific devices.

The presence of these human developments cannot be used to declare an inventory unit unnatural. Only when these developments are of such a number and distribution throughout a unit, or portion of the unit, that they become substantially noticeable to a casual observer can they be used to declare an entire unit or portion of the unit unnatural.

Imprints of man outside a unit are not normally considered in assessing the area's naturalness.

### Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

" . . . has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation . . ."

#### - Wilderness Act of 1964

Two key words appear here: "or" and "outstanding." Either opportunities for solitude or opportunities for primitive recreation must be present for an area to qualify as a WSA; both need not be present. These opportunities must be outstanding in order for an area to qualify as a WSA. Opportunities for either solitude or primitive recreation may exist in an inventory unit, but if these opportunities are not outstanding, the area does not qualify as a WSA.

The evaluation of opportunities for solitude during the inventory is based upon the ability of a unit of a given size, topographic relief and vegetative



type to allow a visitor group to escape the sights and sounds of others within the unit as well as external influences (such as vehicle traffic on boundary roads or significant agricultural development and activity immediately adjacent to the unit.)

The evaluation of opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation is based on a unit's size and ability to provide exceptional or unusual natural features and recreation attractions. Exceptional natural features are those topographic and vegetative features which provide exceptional scenery, create a diversity of landforms and/or enable a visitor to achieve reasonable mobility within a unit, and would result in a strong recreation attraction to a unit for one or more types of activities.

Examples of primitive and unconfined types of recreation are: hiking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, spelunking, horseback riding, mountain or rock climbing, river running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, photography, bird watching, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, and sightseeing for botanical, zoological, or geological features. These opportunities include potential as well as present use.

#### Supplemental Values

" . . . ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value."

- Wilderness Act of 1964

The presence or lack of supplemental values, such as ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical importance will not determine whether an inventory unit becomes a WSA. These values are not essential for WSA status; however, it is important that the presence or absence of these types of features in an area be noted.

#### INTERIM MANAGEMENT POLICY (IMP)

During the period of the wilderness review and until Congress acts on the President's recommendations on which areas are suitable for wilderness designation, the Secretary of the Interior is required to manage lands having wilderness characteristics so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness, subject to certain exceptions and conditions. This management is referred to as "interim management" and is discussed in a BLM document entitled Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review, December 1979. This is available at any BLM office.

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A 90-day public comment period on the Stateline intensive inventory began on April 8, 1981, and ended on July 7, 1981. Seven open houses/workshops were held for the purpose of exchanging information with the public.



Comments on wilderness characteristics were utilized in the intensive inventory decision. General statements on characteristics as well as opinions for or against wilderness will be retained for use later in the study phase.

One comment specific to wilderness characteristics that offered the BLM new information or that shed new light on an issue could have changed the decision on an inventory unit. Conversely, large numbers of comments opposing or supporting study area designation without reference to the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics, had little or no effect on the final decision.

Information concerning other resource values and potential resource conflicts in the inventory units will not be considered until the study phase of the wilderness review. The intent of the public comment period was to gather ideas on the adequacy of the inventory data and the correctness of the recommendations.

Documents and maps describing the final decision are being sent to those indicating an interest in the wilderness program.

The three areas identified as Wilderness Study Areas will be further analyzed through the Bureau's planning process to determine if the areas should receive suitable or non-suitable recommendations for wilderness designation. These recommendations will eventually be forwarded to Congress for the final decision on possible designation of the areas into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### PROTEST AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

The final intensive inventory decision for each inventory unit is considered individually and separately from the decision for every other inventory unit. These decisions will be subject to a 30-day protest period which begins December 18, 1981. The decisions will become final January 18, 1982, unless timely protests are received by the BLM State Directors.

Persons wishing to protest any of these decisions must file a written protest with BLM State Directors (addresses below) by the close of business January 18, 1981. Only those protests received by the State Directors by the time and date specified will be accepted.

Idaho BLM State Director  
Box 042, Federal Building  
550 W. Fort Street  
Boise, Idaho 83724

Oregon BLM State Director  
P. O. Box 2965  
Portland, Oregon 97208

Nevada BLM State Director  
P. O. Box 12000  
Reno, Nevada 98520

Utah BLM State Director  
University Club Building  
136 East South Temple  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

The protest must specify the inventory unit(s) to which it is directed. It must include a clear and concise statement of the reasons for the protest, as well as data to support the reasons stated.

At the conclusion of the protest period, a notice of those decisions that were not protested and therefore have become final, and those decisions which are under formal protest will be published in the Federal Register. The notice will announce that the decision on the units under protest will not become final pending a decision on the protest and any resulting appeal.

A written decision will be issued on any protest which is filed according to the above requirements with a notice published in the Federal Register of the action taken in response to the protest.

Any person adversely affected by the decision on a written protest, may appeal such decision under the provisions of 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 4.



APPENDIX  
NARRATIVE SUMMARIES





OREGON - IDAHO

The following units contain BLM lands in Oregon and Idaho:

Lacking in Wilderness Characteristics

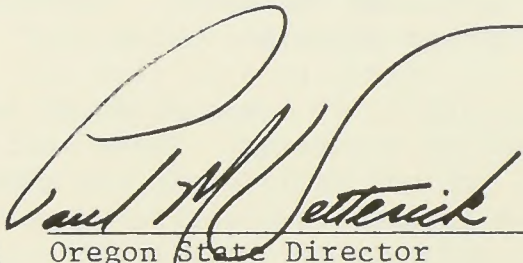
Lookout Butte*	OR-3-194A
	ID-16-48a

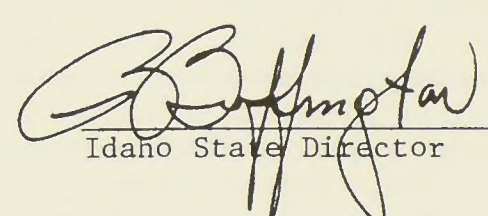
Wilderness Study Area

Owyhee River Canyon**	OR-3-195
	ID-16-48b

- \* The adjacent sub-unit OR-3-194B is also lacking in wilderness characteristics.
- \*\* Portions of this unit, as well as several sub-units lack wilderness characteristics.

ASSOCIATE

  
Oregon State Director

  
Idaho State Director

LOOKOUT BUTTE  
OR-3-194A  
ID-16-48a

The April 1981 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains a total of 104,840 acres of BLM land with 65,640 acres in Oregon and 39,200 acres in Idaho.

During the intensive inventory, the western boundary of unit 3-194 was found to be a way. As a result, acreage from unit 3-198 is now included within unit 3-194. In addition, the north boundary was found to have been inaccurately drawn. This boundary has been corrected on the accompanying map.

In the southwest corner of the unit, a road was identified that creates subunit B, containing 440 acres. This area does not meet the size criteria and is not further described below.

The unit includes 1,580 acres of State land in Oregon, which Oregon BLM is in the process of acquiring. Three sections of State land in Idaho, totalling 1,920 acres, are not included in the above acreage. Any other differences in acreage, from figures used earlier, are a result of more accurate calculations.

The unit is located where Idaho and Oregon join, south of the South Fork of the Owyhee River. The unit is bounded by BLM roads except for a small area of private land along the southeast boundary.

The unit is a large sagebrush flat containing several playas and four low gently sloping buttes. Defeat Butte (5,710 ft.), Lookout Butte (5,640 ft.), and an unnamed butte are in the center of the unit. Spring Butte (5,566 ft.) is in the northeast corner of the unit in Idaho. South of Lookout Butte is Lookout Lake, the largest playa in the unit, stretching over two miles long and a mile wide. In the southwest corner, Tent Creek forms a small canyon that dissipates and then reappears in a twisting configuration in the southeast corner. Spring Creek crosses the center of the eastern boundary through a shallow draw. Midway along the west boundary, along the headwaters of Toppin Creek, a low rim extends east from Stoney Corral. Except for the buttes, none of the features are prominent. Vegetation is mainly sagebrush and native grasses.

NATURALNESS:

The inventory identified 22 reservoirs, approximately 66 miles of ways, and approximately 20 miles of bladed fenceline.

The bladed fenceline dissects the unit approximately in half from north to south. An unbladed fenceline stems off the bladed line near the unit's center and exits near the northwest corner. Both fencelines are noticeable, due to the flatness of the terrain and the lack of vegetative screening.

Nearly all of the reservoirs have access ways connecting them or going to them from boundary roads.



In the southeast corner of the unit, a number of ways, plus a large reservoir in Tent Creek, create a substantially noticeable cumulative impact.

Due to the absence of any substantial screening, the high number of developments, and their distribution throughout the unit, the developments' cumulative impact in the unit is substantially noticeable.

#### SOLITUDE:

The unit consists primarily of only one type of topographic region--that of a broad, flat plateau. Only one small rounded hill (Spring Butte) exists in the northeast portion of the unit. Other topographic variations are limited to very shallow draws or washes. Several small, rounded hills, including Lookout Butte, and very shallow draws are also found in Oregon.

The low sagebrush provides only a small amount of vegetative screening. There is no topographic screening except occasionally in shallow draws and the four low buttes.

The unit is roughly triangular in shape. The shape and large size offer some opportunities for solitude. Despite the large size, the limited screening ability of the low vegetation and the flat terrain render the opportunities for solitude less than outstanding in the unit.

#### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

There are opportunities in this unit for hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, and photography.

The inventory determined that the unit lacks exceptional scenery and a diversity of landforms that would result in a strong attraction to the unit for any type of primitive recreation activity.

Backpacking across the unit could be a monotonous experience with no change in hiking conditions or scenery. There are no unique photographic opportunities in the unit.

Despite the unit's size, the lack of scenic quality and lack of diversity of landforms render the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation less than outstanding.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

There are no known supplemental values in the unit.

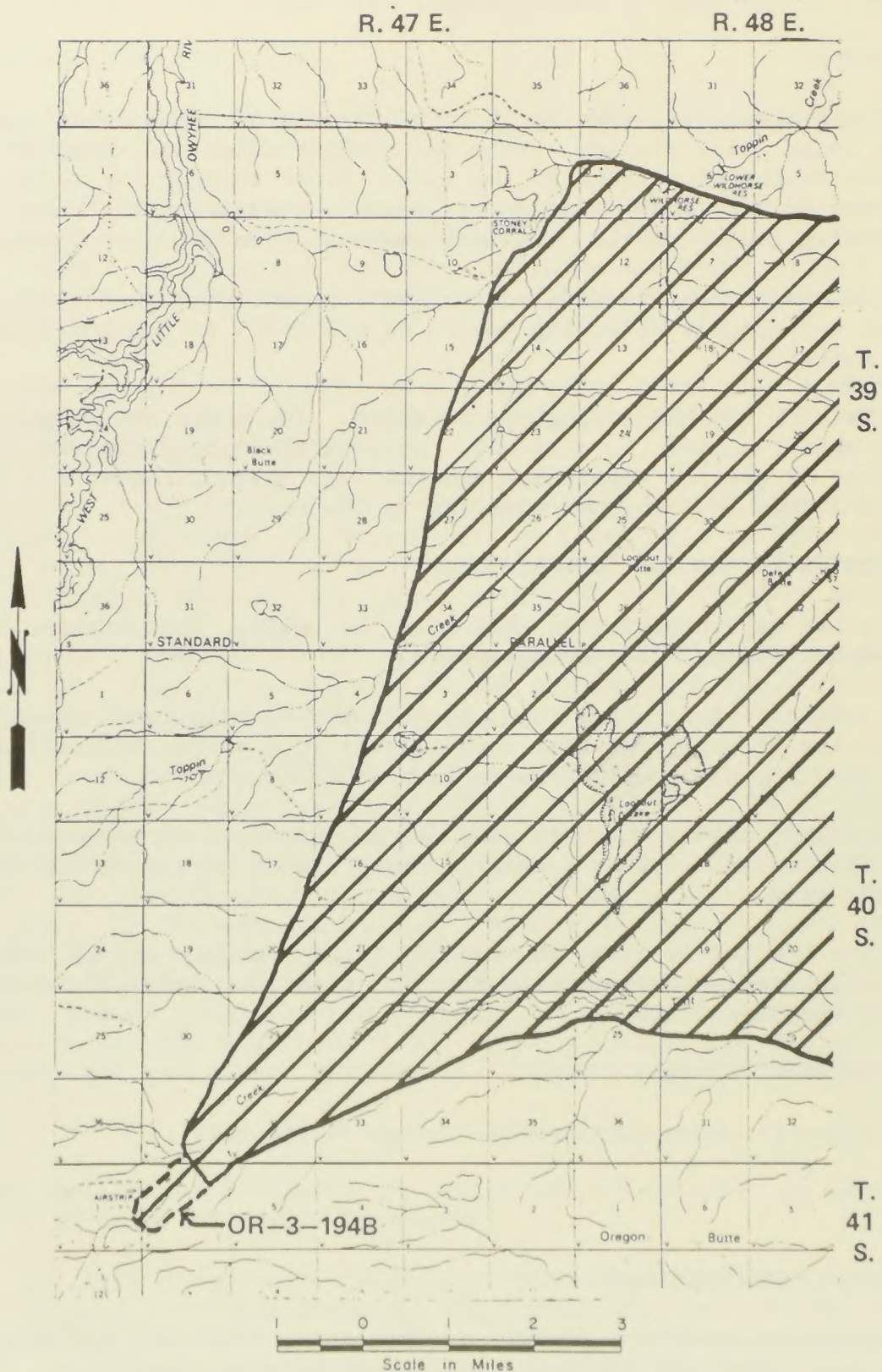
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#### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments received were equally divided among those who agreed with the proposed decision, those who disagreed, and those offering no opinion. One-half of the comments contained information on wilderness characteristics.



WEST HALF  
LOOKOUT BUTTE  
OR-3-194A  
ID-16-48a



LEGEND

- WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
- AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



EAST HALF  
LOOKOUT BUTTE  
OR-3-194A  
ID-16-48a

R. 48 E.

R. 6 W.

R. 5 W.

T. 38 S.

T. 39 S.

T. 40 S.

T. 14 S.

T. 15 S.

T. 16 S.

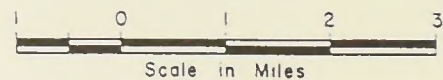
LEGEND



WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS





Comments that agreed with the proposed decision stated that the scenery in the area is common.

Those disagreeing with the proposed decision indicated:

- The unit as a whole is little affected by the minor concentrations of man's imprints.
- Size of the unit, 105,000 acres, is quite large, making it one of the most qualified units; and results in a comparable frequency of man's imprints to other units.
- Grazing, airplane noise, and ways are not works of man, and cannot be factors affecting apparent naturalness.
- The unit has high scenic quality, exceptional scenic value.
- The BLM should have considered seasonal variation in relation to accessibility in evaluating solitude and recreation.
- Five recreation activities denote diversity, qualifying the unit as outstanding.
- Lookout Butte provides at least three recreation activities (hiking, horseback riding, and backpacking).
- Because of the unit's great size, it offers distant travel, and ease of travel among the shallow draws and hills.
- The BLM mention of scenery and landform diversity is improper, requiring that the unit possess supplemental values.
- Unit should not be judged on aesthetic values unless naturalness is the question.

#### COMMENT ANALYSIS:

The number of imprints of man identified in this unit cannot be described as a minor concentration. As stated in the proposed decision, the number of imprints, the type (ways, reservoirs, and bladed fencelines), in combination with the lack of substantial screening, and their distribution throughout the unit provide a cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable, therefore, the unit fails to meet the naturalness criteria, regardless of its large size.

In evaluating the wilderness characteristics of a particular unit it cannot be compared to another unit, except in the consistency in applying the criteria. Each unit is different, therefore the combination of factors, as listed above, that exist in this unit is the determining criteria in evaluating wilderness characteristics of this unit.



Grazing was not mentioned in the evaluation of the wilderness characteristics of the unit. Livestock grazing in itself is indirectly caused by man in that he has placed the animals in the area, however, the range developments, definitely man's work, were considered as part of the cumulative impacts that disqualified the unit under the naturalness criteria. The BLM disagrees with the statement that airplane noises and ways are not works of man. Airplane noises were not mentioned in the proposed decision. Vehicle ways, made by man, are considered imprints, and contribute greatly to the lack of naturalness.

The comment concerning high scenic quality in the unit expressed the opinion of the writer, and was not supported by additional data. The opinion of the BLM is that the unit's scenery is not diverse and does not contain any unique or significant features.

Seasonal variation was considered in the evaluation of outstanding solitude and recreation.

A diversity of recreation opportunities does not make the opportunities outstanding. The BLM inventory procedures indicate that an outstanding determination may be made based on the outstanding quality of one opportunity or through the diversity in the number of activities possible in the unit. It does not state that diversity automatically means outstanding.

The unit does offer large size, permitting easy travel over distance for recreationists. However, this is only one of the factors involved in determining outstanding recreation opportunities. More important in this unit is the lack of exceptional scenery or attractions and a lack in diversity of landforms that would provide an interest to primitive recreation users. Thus the unit was determined not to provide an outstanding opportunity.

It was mentioned in the comments that scenery and landform diversity were improperly used in the recreation evaluation. These two factors relate indirectly to the primary recreation activities of hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, and photography. More importantly they become a primary consideration in the attractiveness of the unit to recreation users. In this unit the scenery and landform do not provide this attraction, thus the opportunities are not outstanding.

The BLM disagrees that aesthetics should only be considered in the naturalness evaluation. Aesthetics also become an important consideration in the determination of outstanding recreation opportunities.

\* \* \*

#### DECISION:

No new information was received through public comment that would warrant a change in the decision.

The unit does not qualify as a WSA due to a lack of naturalness, and a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation.



OWYHEE RIVER CANYON  
OR-3-195  
ID-16-48b

The April 1981 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains a total of 250,380 acres of BLM land with 216,680 acres in Oregon, and 33,700 acres in Idaho. The following paragraphs describe the makeup of unit OR-3-195 and ID-16-48b.

During the intensive inventory of Oregon unit 3-143, additional roads and private lands were found that divided the unit into five subunits (3-143A, B, C, D, and E). Subunit B (1,200 acres) is in the extreme northern tip of the original unit. Subunit C (680 acres) and D (300 acres) are immediately south of B. Subunit E (200 acres) is along the northeast boundary. Subunits B, C, D, and E do not meet the minimum size requirements, and are not further described below.

These deletions result in a unit totalling 248,000 acres--214,300 acres in Oregon and 33,700 acres in Idaho.

Several boundary adjustments have been made to subunit A mentioned above. The southern boundary was found not to be a road, incorporating unit 3-176 (21,540 acres). A portion of the southern boundary of 3-176 was also found not to be a road, which adds 2,560 acres from unit 3-179. The northwest corner of the old 3-176 unit was found not to be a road, which adds another 340 acres. Several minor boundary realignments (totalling a net loss of 310 acres) were also necessary.

After deletion of the subunits, addition of the other units, and boundary realignments, the resulting total acreage for subunit 3-143A is 72,700.

The boundary between unit 3-143A and 3-195 was also found not to meet the road definition. This resulted in their combination.

Unit 3-195 originally contained 67,620 acres. During the intensive inventory, extensive boundary adjustments were made. It was found that many of the boundaries, thought to be roads, were either ways or non-existent. Some boundaries were inaccurately placed. The boundary adjustments resulted in the absorption of units 192, 193, 196, and 197, increasing the unit to 129,600 acres. Idaho unit 16-48b (33,700 acres) is also part of the total unit.

During the joint Oregon-Idaho inventory, carried out just prior to completion of this report, a subunit was identified (3-195F - 12,000 acres). In the initial inventory this area was referred to as unit 3-189.

Subunit F lies 25 miles northeast of McDermitt, Nevada, and is bound entirely by roads. The subunit does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude because of its small size and lack of topographic and vegetative screening. It does not offer outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation because of the absence of any interesting or challenging terrain and unique or unusual attractions.



For the above reasons, subunit F does not meet the criteria, and will not be further discussed below.

The grand total resulting from all of the above changes is a unit of 236,000 excluding the 14,380 acres in subunits listed above as dropped.

The Oregon acreage includes 320 acres of State land near Anderson Crossing which Oregon BLM presently is in the process of acquiring. Non-Federal inholdings, not included in the acreage figures, include three 40-acre private parcels in Oregon, along Louse Canyon near Anderson Crossing, and two State sections in Idaho along the South Fork of the Owyhee.

The unit extends from its northern limits near Rome, Oregon, south along the Owyhee River to Three Forks (junction of the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Owyhee), to Five Bar (junction of the South Fork and West Little Owyhee), to Anderson Crossing on the West Little Owyhee, and to Crotcher's Crossing on the South Fork in Idaho.

The northern tip of the unit is bound by private lands and roads. The eastern boundary is a combination of BLM roads, State land, and private land. In the Mud Flat area, across from Rim Rock Reservoir, a short dead end road penetrates to a scenic overlook. From Long Canyon Reservoir to Three Forks is a county road. South of that area, the unit is bound by private and State land until the unit enters Idaho, where roads form the boundary, with the exception of a small private parcel at Crotcher's Crossing and a State section along the southeast boundary.

Three interior roads, totalling 4.75 miles enter the unit in Idaho and dead end at reservoirs or at the canyon rim. Three interior roads also enter the unit in Oregon, penetrating approximately 14 miles, dead ending at a reservoir and two water tanks. Pipeline roads and BLM roads form the western boundary, with a small private parcel at Anderson Crossing.

The unit offers two types of terrain--high elevation plateaus, and deep canyons. The plateaus consist of undulating sagebrush flats, playas, and an occasional gently sloping hill or butte.

The unit contains over 95 miles of the Owyhee River Canyon and major tributary canyons. The canyons are up to 1,300 feet deep with steep or sheer walls, rugged breaks, and rims that allow only occasional access. The Owyhee River consists of numerous areas of white water rapids, during the spring and early summer seasons. These rapids, ranging from Class II through VI, slice through vertical canyon walls. The walls are of a pinkish-brown rhyolite, exhibiting tall pinnacles and chimneys. The floor of the canyon varies from wide, sandy bars to narrow, wall-to-wall rock-strewn rapids.

Throughout the unit vegetation consists of sage, bunchgrass, and occasional junipers in the canyon.

#### NATURALNESS:

Several intrusions within the unit are substantially noticeable. They include the area around the abandoned Scott's Ranch at the extreme northern end of the



unit. This area contains a reservoir, cabin, corrals, fences, a diversion dam, a diversion ditch, and several ways. Due primarily to the narrowness of the unit at this point, the cumulative impact of intrusions is substantially noticeable, in an area of 200 acres.

Approximately four miles up river from Scott's Ranch along the north boundary is a fire brush control and seeding. Within and immediately adjacent to the seeding are three miles of fence, a reservoir, water tower, three miles of buried pipeline, and the accompanying construction/maintenance ways. The cumulative impact of these intrusions is substantially noticeable over an area of 1,000 acres.

From Three Forks, north to Indian Canyon, above the east rim are two areas of brush control, with one area seeded. Within the 5,600 acres covered by these vegetative manipulations are five reservoirs, approximately two miles of fence, and eight miles of ways. Immediately north of these vegetative manipulations is another reservoir and two ways. Immediately south of Three Forks is a cabin, corrals, parking area and a two-mile way cut into the side of the canyon. All of these intrusions combine to cause a substantially noticeable cumulative impact in the vegetative manipulation area.

Several reservoirs are located immediately adjacent to the unit boundary. Because of their close proximity to the boundary they are easily visible and consequently substantially noticeable. Approximately 100 acres are effected.

Other intrusions located within the unit are substantially unnoticeable. They include 50 small reservoirs scattered randomly throughout the unit. Although the total number may seem high, the unit is substantially large. Many of the reservoirs are along the canyon rim where drainages fall off into the river. This puts them above the view from inside the canyon, but below the line-of-sight across the rolling plateaus. Consequently, they are substantially unnoticeable because they are small, located in shallow draws or natural depressions, or screened by the terrain and widely distributed.

Throughout the unit are 39 miles of fence. This fencing is substantially unnoticeable because of the short lengths, distances apart, and the screening provided by the terrain or the tall sage. The fences create little contrast and blend into the background, and in some cases are constructed of native material.

The fence running east/west for ten miles from Spring Creek to Toppin Creek to just north of Oregon Lake and then to the South Fork of the Owyhee was bladed during the original construction. Three and a half miles of the Stateline is also bladed. Both of these old blade scars are substantially unnoticeable because they are regenerating and are screened by sagebrush. They are only visible when one is directly upon them and viewing down their length. In the southeast portion of the unit a concentration of fencelines eliminates some small acreage. (The total Idaho acreage remains the same due to a recalculation of acreage by more accurate methods.)

Intertwined throughout the unit are approximately 84 miles of ways. The majority are located between the West Little Owyhee and the South Fork of



the Owyhee, providing access to the small stock ponds scattered throughout this area. The remainder of the ways are short, extending from the unit boundary to the rim's edge. The ways are substantially unnoticeable because they are screened by the sagebrush in the flat terrain and are widely distributed over the large unit. They are little used, often barely visible, and sometimes difficult to follow and travel.

A buried pipeline extends approximately one mile into the unit west of Five Bar. It is substantially unnoticeable because of regeneration.

Two miles down river from Three Forks are two old shelters about a mile apart. They are substantially unnoticeable because of their very small size and construction with natural materials.

With the exception of the acreage mentioned above, the location, number, and distribution of these imprints of man, in combination with topographic and vegetative screening, make the imprints substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole.

#### SOLITUDE:

The unit is divided into two types of topographic regions:

- The canyon of the Owyhee River, the South Fork, and the many other tributary canyons. The main canyons have inner talus slopes, covered with sagebrush and grass. The upper breaks of the cliffs are sprinkled with juniper. The tributary canyons are extremely narrow, with sheer cliffs rising from the bottom of the canyons to form rock grottos and washes. Juniper are also sprinkled in the upper breaks of these cliffs.
- The flat to rolling sagebrush plateau, which is cut by the Owyhee River. The northern plateau is mostly gently rolling terrain, dropping off into the four major tributary canyons. The southern plateau is relatively flat, yet broken into two levels along the South Fork by high, meandering rimrock areas. Juniper is lightly scattered over the northern plateau, but is limited to small isolated areas of rimrock in the lower plateau.

The inventory determined that the rugged, meandering canyons, the rolling northern plateau, and the southern plateau, broken by rimrock, provide excellent screening among visitors and excellent potential for dispersed use.

The canyons have the potential to concentrate visitors into one major corridor of use (the river), and increase the potential for visitor interaction. However, the length of the canyons within the unit (95 miles) and their meandering character would lessen this visitor interaction.

The major tributary canyons are evenly dispersed through the unit, thus providing a choice of locations for hikers to enter or leave the main canyon. The rolling and dissected topography of the plateaus also help disperse and screen hiking groups.



Because of the large size and good configuration of the unit, the presence of topographic screening over much of the unit, the ability of the topography or natural flow of the rivers to separate visitors, and the lack of external influences over most of the unit, the unit offers outstanding opportunities for solitude.

#### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

The unit offers many excellent opportunities for various recreational activities. Some of the more outstanding opportunities include river running (with kayak, canoe, or raft), backpacking, photography, fishing, hiking, small cave spelunking, hunting, wildlife viewing, exploring, rock climbing, and sightseeing. Exploring the length of the canyon is both fascinating and challenging for people on foot or watercraft. There are unlimited photographic topics along the canyon; subjects include white-water, geologic formations, wildlife, scenic vistas, or abstracts. The walls of the canyon offer an occasional cave to explore. The whitewater rapids (rated from Class II through VI), offer excellent sport for the rafter or kayaker. The river contains game fish. Hunting for chukar, waterfowl, or trophy buck provides challenging experiences. The canyon walls provide a challenge for the climber skilled on lava rock. On the sagebrush plateaus, unimpeded hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and Nordic skiing can be experienced for many miles.

The main canyons of the Owyhee River and the South Fork Owyhee River, and their tributary canyons, are deep, sheer-walled, meandering canyons. They have beautifully colored rock faces and numerous beautiful rock spires. The walls of the Owyhee River canyon reach as high as 1,300 feet, with tributary canyons reaching 600 to 800 feet high. The combination of moving water, sheer, colorful, high cliffs, and scattered juniper creates an exceptionally beautiful canyon system. The sharp contrast between the extremely narrow tributary canyons and the more open main canyons adds diversity to the scenic resources of the unit.

High sheer walls of the canyon can give visitors a sense of confinement and restricted mobility. However, the number of miles of river canyon and the natural movement of the river negate the confinement and restricted mobility caused by the canyon walls. In addition, the major tributary canyons at regular intervals give a visitor a sense of being able to leave the canyon.

Because of the diversity of natural features, the challenge of the recreation opportunities, the presence of exceptionally scenic features, and the number of miles of canyon in the unit, the unit offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The unit is of exceptional scenic quality. There are spectacular views within the canyon walls. From the plateau, visitors can view the Owyhee Range, the Santa Rosa and the Trout Creek Mountains.

The exceptional geological, ecological, and cultural values offer an excellent classroom for the study of canyon ecosystems, the region's past, and the effects of erosion.



Zoological values include the redbanded trout, river otter, excellent raptor habitat, and a potential bighorn sheep area.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Most of the comments received agreed with the proposed decision. The remaining comments were about equally divided among those disagreeing and those offering no opinion. Three-fourths of the comments provided information on wilderness characteristics.

Comments that agreed with the proposed decision stated the following:

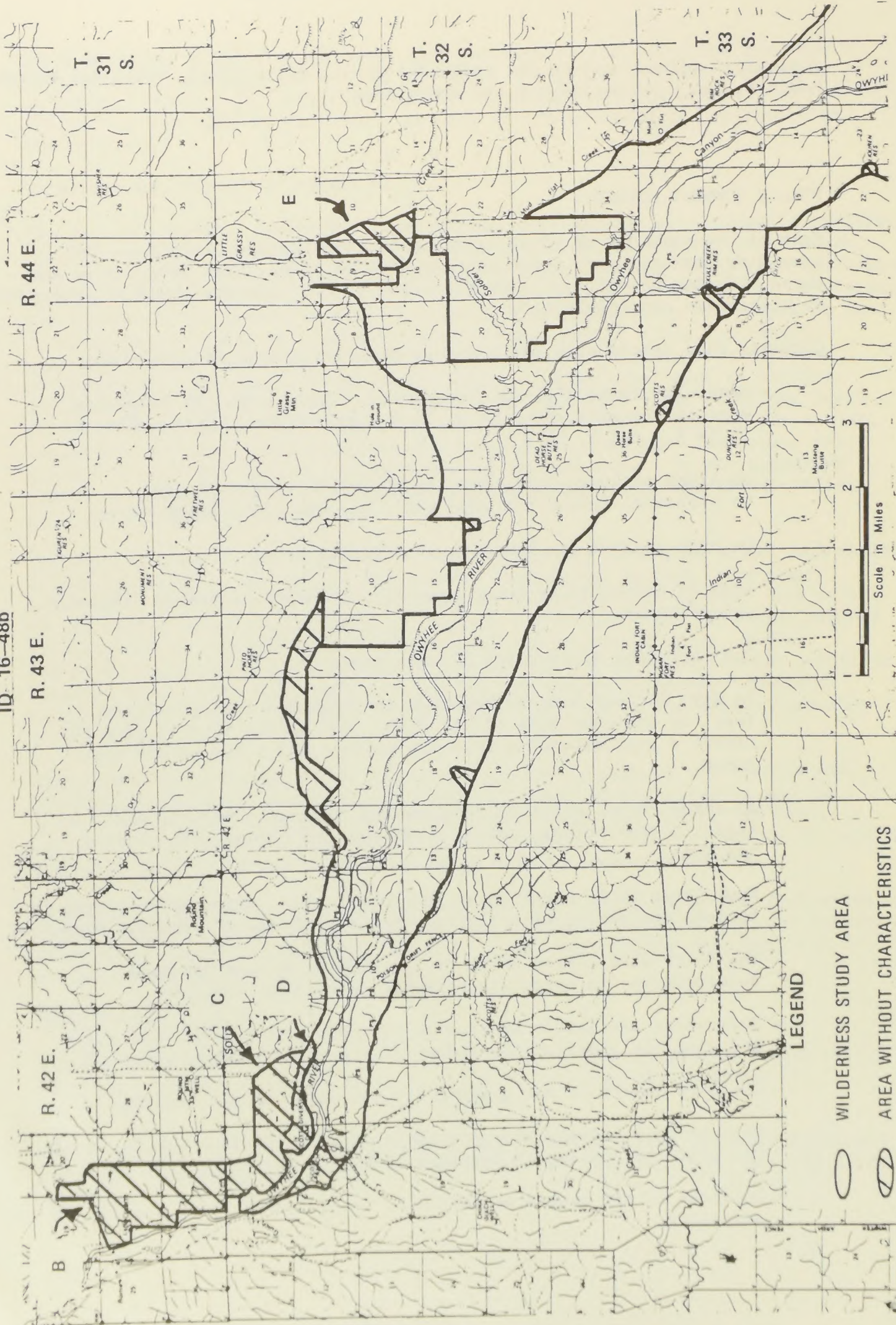
- Generally agree with the boundaries. Agree with the deletions east of the main river in T. 34 S., and on the Little Owyhee in T. 38 S., and T. 39 S.
- No signs of human intrusions in the floor of the canyon. On plateaus, fences and ways can't be seen until quite close.
- On high benches are examples of ungrazed areas.
- Area is unspoiled by human presence; evidence of man is virtually non-existent.
- One intrusive disturbance is cheatgrass.
- In Warm Springs Canyon, man-made developments include a road (way) on the east side of the river, not easily visible from the river; a pipe extending from the spring; and a new barbed wire fence.
- At Three Forks, man-made developments include a corral, BLM signs, a root cellar, cabin, outhouse, and bridge (all outside the WSA).
- From Three Forks north to an abandoned cabin, man-made developments include the cabin, with little overall evidence of previous visitors.
- The first side canyon north of Three Forks has no man-made developments; is extremely pristine, providing isolation.
- Reservoirs and cattle grazing on the east side of the road along the east rim diminish the impact of the scenic canyon somewhat.
- The only impact of man observed in the unit was pot hunting.
- One can only occasionally see man's imprint (distant fences, etc.). One gets the feeling of complete isolation in the canyon.
- Solitude in the canyon is complete; bends in the river provide perfect screening.



NORTH  
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON

OR-3-195

ID 16-48b





R. 44 E.

CENTRAL  
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON  
OR-3-195  
ID-16-48b

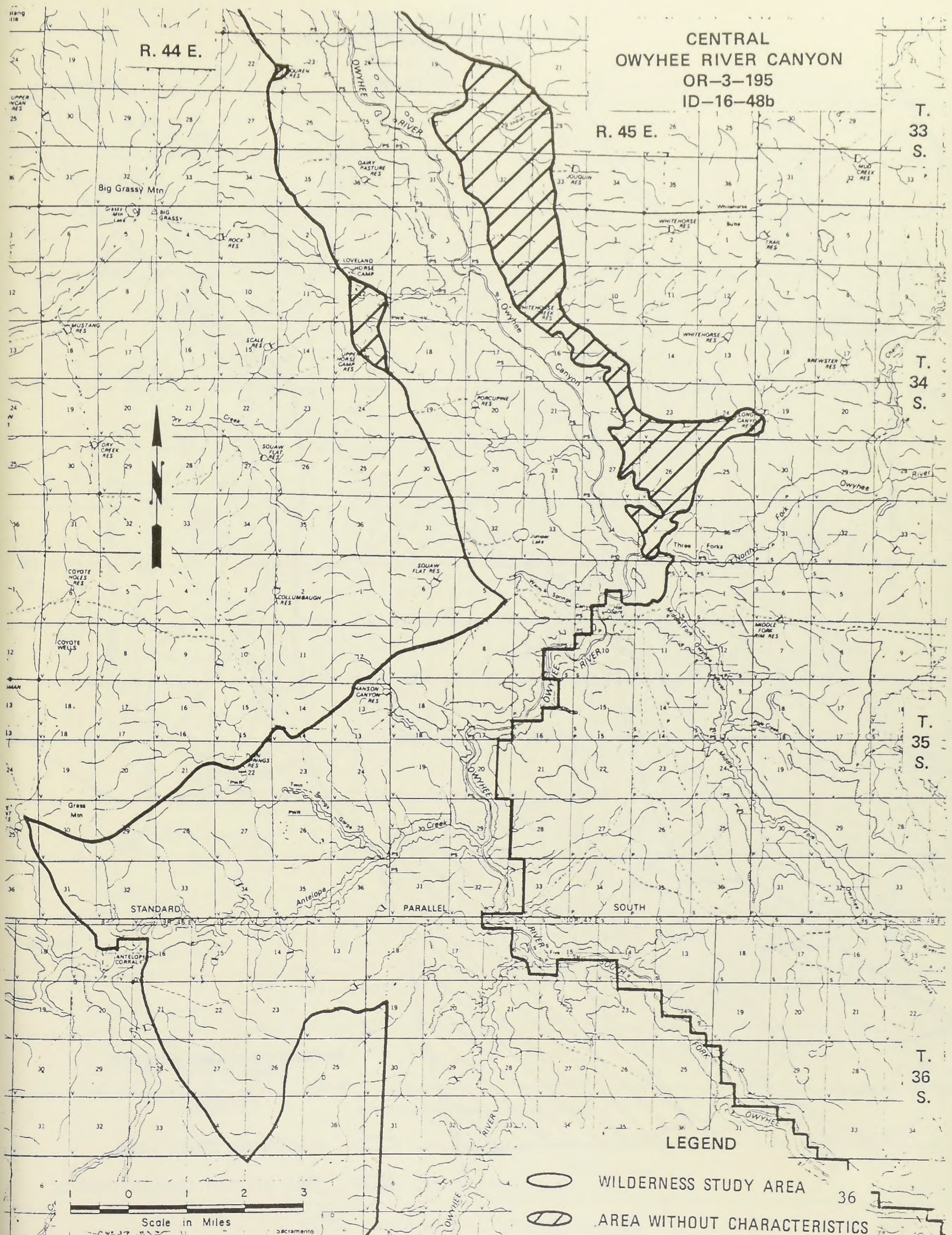
R. 45 E.

T.  
33  
S.

T.  
34  
S.

T.  
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S.

T.  
36  
S.



LEGEND



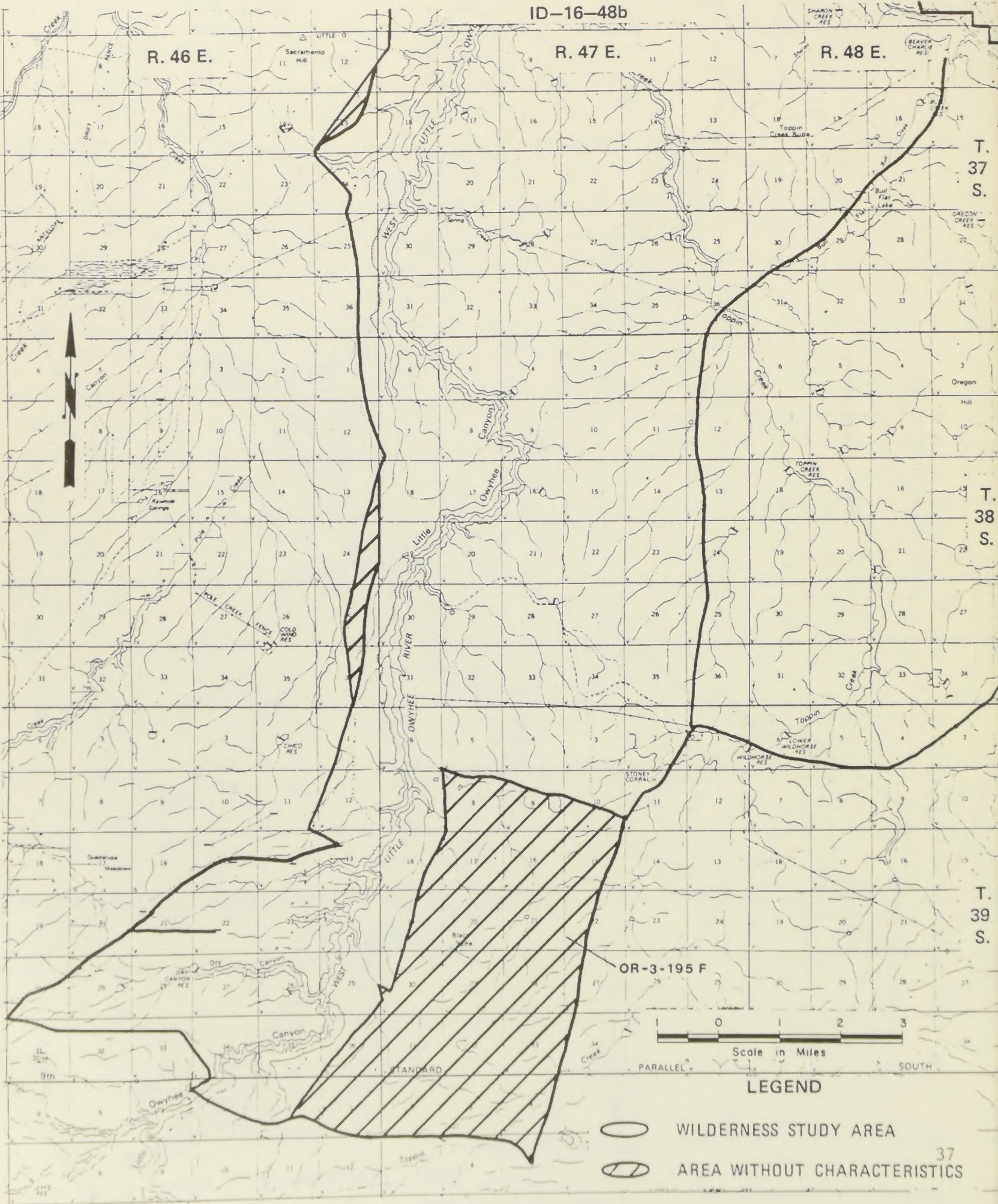
WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS

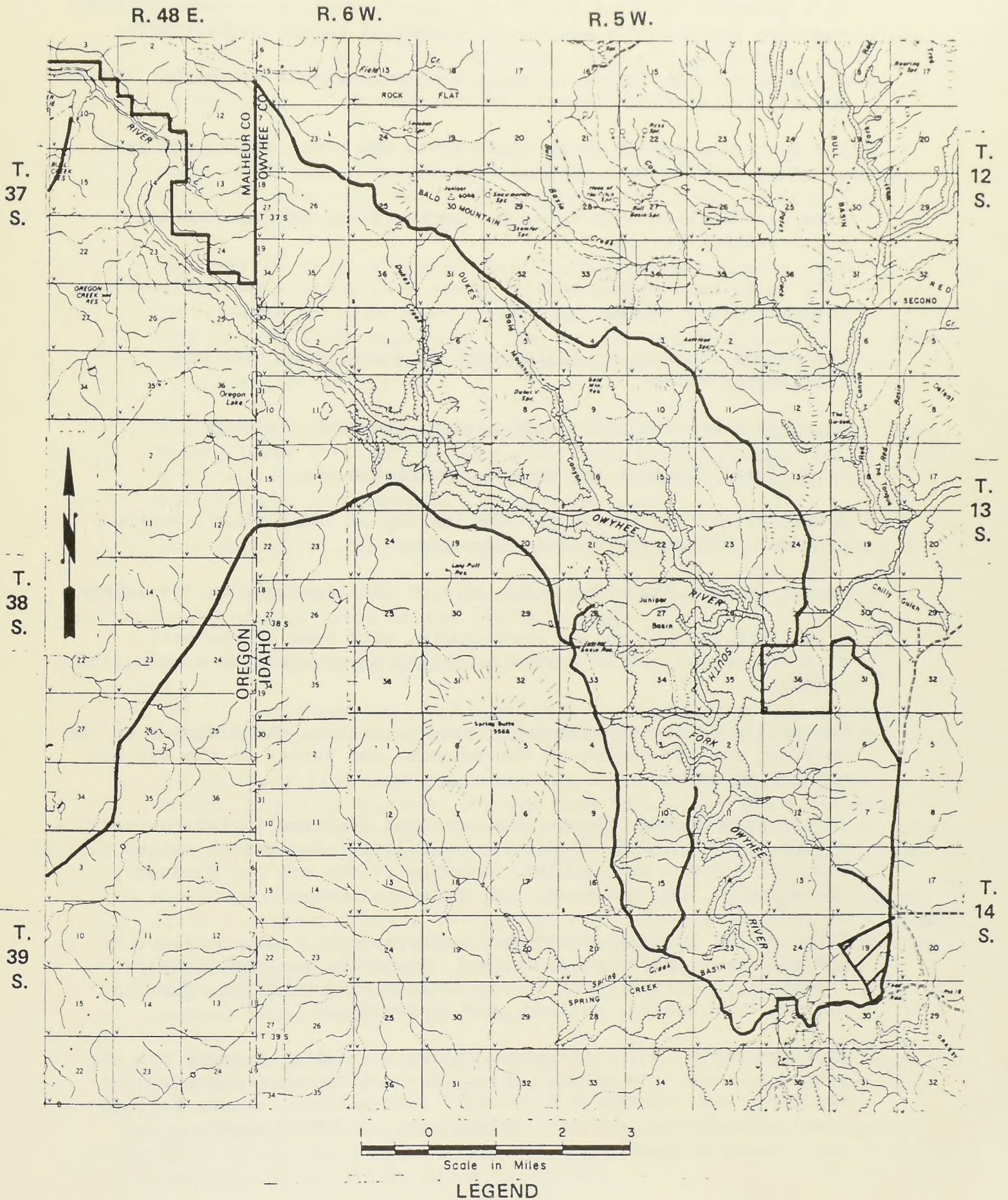


SOUTHWEST  
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON  
OR-3-195  
ID-16-48b





EAST  
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON  
OR-3-195  
ID-16-48b



WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



- The high canyon walls, side canyons and tributaries, and sweeping vistas complete the sense of grandeur and isolation.
- It's possible to climb out of the canyon easily at several points, reducing the corridor effect, as described in the April report.
- Vegetative screening is minimal, however, some of the higher benches and the tributaries disperse visitor impact.
- The flat rims are in sharp contrast to the river canyon and lend grandeur to the view; diverse terrain.
- Area has excellent potential for backpacking, hiking, hunting, and horseback riding.
- Unit is an outstanding natural area; with scenic, recreational, and ecological values.
- The narrow canyons are filled with deep swimming holes and challenging rocks.
- Antelope Creek and other side canyons are beautiful.
- Many floral displays are on the rimrock benches.
- Hikers within the canyon get the feeling of being alone; canyons provide a unique backpacking experience.
- Canyon is very beautiful, with lots of interesting rock formations.
- Scenic and natural values predominate, with some of the most exciting canyon vistas anywhere. Side canyons provide a stimulating change.
- Recreation experiences include imposing vistas, the grandeur of the canyons, the excitement of the unknown, and purity of the air and water combined.
- In the Warm Springs Canyon area, natural features include waterfalls, rapids, canyon walls, shells, and wildlife. Recreation values include fishing, hiking, backpacking, swimming (river and hot springs), photography, bird watching, and historical areas.
- From the hot springs downstream to Three Forks, natural features include large sandbars, geological diversity, and contrasting vegetation. Recreational values include bird watching, fishing, hiking, backpacking, boating, and photography.
- At Three Forks, with little vegetative screening, campers are not easily blocked from others' view. Natural features include nice sandbars, and vegetative diversity. Recreational values include fishing, swimming, boating, photography, and bird watching; an excellent put-in area for river trips.



- From Three Forks north to the abandoned cabin, natural features include scenic views and geological diversity, small rapids, and sheer canyon walls. Recreational values include hiking, backpacking, camping areas, rafting, bird watching, and photography.
- First side canyon, north of Three Forks is a great area for nature watching. Any primitive recreation is possible in the canyon, except water-based activities; no water by June. An historical marker is in the area.
- Along the east rim are the best scenic overlooks of the larger sections of canyon walls and river floodplain. Recreation values include photography and bird watching. The established scenic overlook receives much use; trash evident.
- The unit is of high scenic quality; exceptional scenic value.
- Outstanding solitude and recreational values are enhanced by numerous wildlife sightings. The variety and abundance of wildlife reinforce the feeling of untouched naturalness. The canyons are excellent for wildlife.
- The West Little Owyhee from Anderson Crossing to South Fork, Toppin Creek (lower portion), Antelope and Twin Springs Creeks and the South Fork from above the West Little Owyhee to below Antelope Creek - qualifies as an outstanding wilderness area.
- Many geological formations (pinnacles and caves) are in the unit.

Comments that disagreed with the proposed decision or portions of the rationale for the decision stated the following:

- Scenery in the unit is common.
- The BLM neglected seasonal variation and the impact this has on accessibility, in relation to solitude and recreation opportunities.
- The boundary line that separates the 5,600 acres dropped near Indian Canyon on the east rim has been improperly drawn along an old brush fire line that appears natural. Imprints within the 5,600-acre area are minimal; ways are not factors affecting naturalness.
- The area along the Main and South Forks of the Owyhee, starting in T. 35 S., and extending through T. 37 S., should be extended eastward to the rims for protection against encroachment and to preserve the canyon/plateau viewshed. This South Fork area has wilderness characteristics, wildlife views, recreation, and geological examples; general human evidence is absent.
- It appears to be an obvious attempt by BLM to eliminate sage vegetation between the east rim and the road and on the east side of the road.
- The area between the east rim and the road is valuable, but may not be of wilderness value. If not made an "area of critical environmental concern," it should be added to the WSA.



- In Sections 9 and 16, T. 36 S., a put-in, take-out point for river trips, man-made works are minor or not visible. Roads shown as dashed lines on the map are mostly not there. Unit should include all of these sections.
- Unit should include all of Section 15, T. 36 S., to protect the wilderness area. It is realized these lands are private. The old 6 Bar Ranch buildings provide only a minor view intrusion, and are only visible for a short stretch.
- Subunit F should not have been subdivided from the main unit, and then excluded based on its small size and resultant lack of outstanding solitude.
- Subunit F possesses a diversity of recreation opportunities. Hunting and wildlife viewing were described as outstanding in the main unit; they are also outstanding in Subunit F.
- Subunit F is vital to the canyon/plateau interaction from the head of Toppin Creek, and the area around Anderson Crossing.
- The west boundary in Section 24, T. 37 S., R. 46 E., should be extended as far west and north as possible to the summit of Sacramento Hill.
- Numerous ways were "high bladed" at the time reservoirs were constructed.
- There is a route from Bay Duke Reservoir to Five Bar.
- There are salting routes south of Pinto Horse Reservoir and north of Indian Creek Reservoir.

#### COMMENT ANALYSIS:

The comment that scenery in the area is common was not supported by additional data. That opinion is not shared by the BLM.

Seasonal variation was considered in the evaluation of outstanding solitude and recreation.

The area containing 5,600 acres near Indian Canyon was dropped due to the cumulative effect of the six reservoirs, two miles of fence and ways, in combination with the vegetative manipulations. The area does not appear natural. Contrary to public comment, ways can provide negative impacts on the naturalness.

Comments asked for a boundary change along the South Fork of the Owyhee from T. 35 S., to T. 37 S., to extend the unit to the rim. The unit boundary in this area was drawn along land ownership lines. The BLM cannot in the wilderness inventory extend a WSA boundary to incorporate non-Federally owned lands along the perimeter.

Lands in Sections 9 and 16 at Five Bar also cannot be included within the WSA, as they are non-Federal in ownership. As was mentioned in the comments, the same situation occurs in Section 15 at Five Bar.



Subunit F was subdivided from the main unit due to additional roads found during recent field inventories. As the subunit is bound entirely by roads, it in essence becomes a separate unit, not subject to or dependent on any of the evaluations for the main unit.

Subunit F does contain sufficient size to meet the basic size requirement, being over 5,000 acres. No significant impacts to naturalness were noted in the subunit. It was dropped due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation. Due to its small size, lack of topographic and vegetative screening, and the absence of interesting and challenging terrain and unique attractions, the subunit does not offer outstanding opportunities. The fact that the adjacent main unit does provide outstanding opportunities, has no bearing on the determination of those opportunities in the subunit, a unit of entirely different composition than the main unit.

Comments asked for an extension of the unit boundary westward in T. 37 S., to Sacramento Hill. The boundary of the unit in this area is formed by an identified road, and therefore cannot be extended westward.

The "high blading" to remove tall vegetation cannot be distinguished from vehicles passing over a route and beating down the vegetation. Unless there was soil disturbance during the creation of a route, it cannot be determined that it was constructed and is a road as defined in the inventory procedures. There is no remaining evidence of a route beyond Bay Duke Reservoir. Any previously existing route has deteriorated to the point of not being distinguishable. The salting routes near Pinto Horse Reservoir and the Indian Canyon Reservoir are substantially unnoticeable and do not effect the unit's appearance as being generally natural.

Several comments identified high concentrations of peregrine falcons in the unit. While there may be peregrine falcons present there have been very few confirmed reports. Most falcons found in the area are prairie falcons. A comment identified elk in the unit. There are no elk in or near the unit.

\* \* \*

#### DECISION:

No new information was received through public comment that would warrant a change in the decision.

An area of 229,100 acres is identified as a WSA; the remaining 21,280 acres are dropped from wilderness review due to a lack of naturalness, or due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation.

The 229,100-acre WSA contains 195,400 acres in Oregon and 33,700 acres in Idaho.





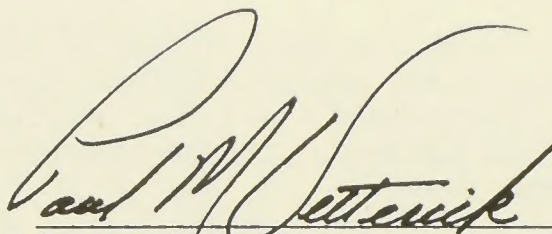


OREGON - NEVADA - IDAHO

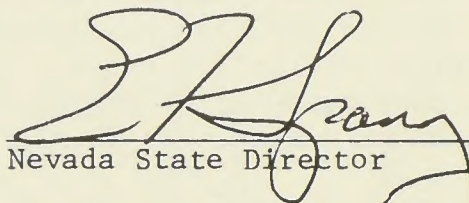
The following unit contains BLM lands in Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho, and is lacking in wilderness characteristics:

Oregon Butte

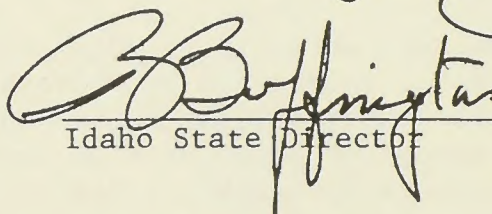
OR-3-159  
NV-020-811  
ID-16-70e



ASSOCIATE Oregon State Director



Nevada State Director



Idaho State Director



OREGON BUTTE  
OR-3-159  
NV-020-811  
ID-16-70e

The April 1981 proposed decision included the following evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The unit contains a total of 46,520 acres of BLM land with 32,440 acres in Oregon, 10,680 acres in Nevada, and 3,400 acres in Idaho. Differences in these figures and those used previously, are due to more accurate acreage calculations. The Nevada portion of the unit was previously called Tent Creek.

In Oregon, during the intensive inventory, the former boundary between units OR-3-187 and OR-3-159 was determined not to be a road, resulting in a combination of the two areas. The acreage listed above as BLM acreage includes 2,200 acres Oregon BLM is in the process of acquiring from the State of Oregon. In Nevada there are 400 acres of private land inholdings.

The unit is bounded entirely by roads except for a small area in the southwest where it is bounded by private lands. Topography within the unit is flat to gently rolling tablelands. Oregon and Mahogany Buttes, and Tent and Mahogany Creeks provide the only noticeable diversity of relief. Vegetation consists of sagebrush and native grasses.

NATURALNESS:

The unit contains one reservoir, approximately eight miles of ways, 19 miles of bladed fence lines and three miles of bladed Oregon-Idaho stateline. The bladed Oregon-Idaho border is rehabilitating itself by natural processes.

All of these imprints of man are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole, because the sagebrush screens them on the flat terrain. The unit appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature.

SOLITUDE:

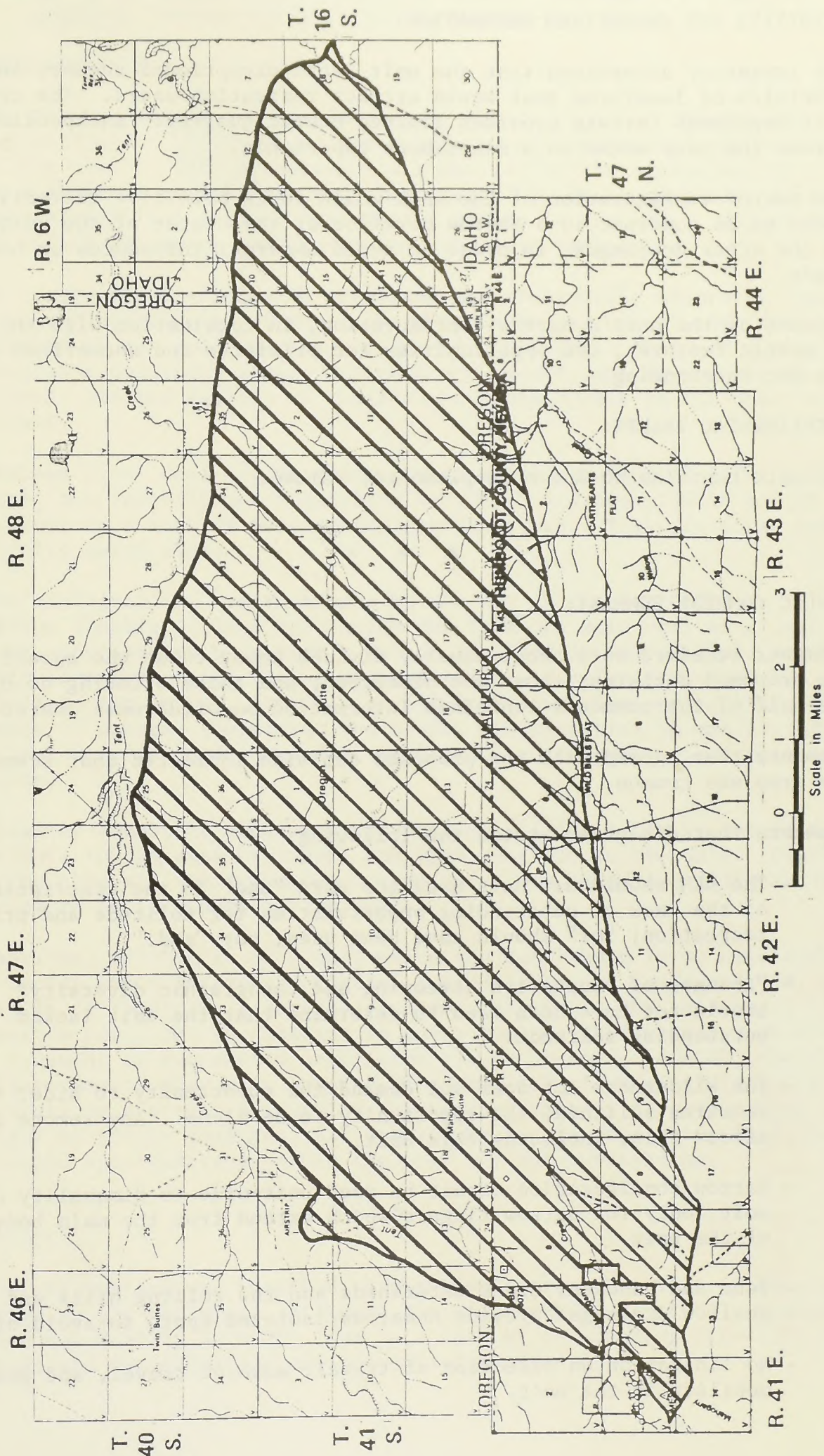
The majority of the unit consists of a flat, open sagebrush plateau. The two buttes in Oregon, and Tent and Mahogany Creeks on the far western side, provide the only variation in relief. The two creeks provide only limited locations for seclusion.

The unit's size provides some opportunities for solitude, however, the elongated shape (the maximum distance from the perimeter to the core is 2 1/2 miles) makes it difficult to avoid the presence of others.

Due to the absence of vegetative screening and topographic diversity, the unit does not provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.



OREGON BUTTE  
OR-3-159  
NV-020-811  
ID-16-70e



- LEGEND
- WILDERNESS STUDY AREA
  - ▨ AREA WITHOUT CHARACTERISTICS



#### PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION:

The inventory determined that the unit lacks exceptional scenery and a diversity of landforms that would attract recreation users. The open, flat sagebrush terrain provides limited scenic quality. Backpacking across the unit would be a monotonous experience.

The narrow configuration of the unit would force primitive recreation users to be confined in a narrow corridor at the center of the unit, or in the creek drainages, in order to avoid external influences or boundary roads.

Because of the unit's narrow configuration, in combination with the lack of scenic features, the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are not outstanding.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES:

The unit contains no known supplemental values.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY:

Comments received were about equally divided among those who agreed with the proposed decision, those who disagreed, and those offering no opinion. One-half of the comments contained information on wilderness characteristics.

Comments that agreed with the proposed decision indicated that scenery in the area was common.

Comments that disagreed stated the following:

- The BLM should not have used the word "and" in the description of the lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation; "or" should have been used, not "and."
- "Absence of vegetative screening and topographic diversity" should not have been used to determine that the unit lacked outstanding solitude.
- The Wilderness Act does not demand the opportunity to hide; it requires solitude, the opportunity to be alone. Any remote area offers this, including this unit.
- Narrow configuration cannot be used unit-wide to disqualify a unit, only for narrow fingers which extend from the main body of the unit.
- Tent and Mahogeny Creek watersheds and the rolling hills and shallow drainages provide numerous isolated spots to avoid others.
- No limitation on direction of travel, ease of travel, and good mobility in the unit.



- Narrow configuration and lack of scenic features are improper analysis factors for outstanding recreation.

#### COMMENT ANALYSIS:

In the BLM recommendation it was stated, " . . . lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation." "And" was used in this sentence as a summation of the statements in earlier sections on solitude and recreation. In those sections, it was clearly stated that neither opportunity exists in the unit. Therefore, "and" is not incorrect wording in the summation paragraph.

" . . . absence of vegetative screening and topographic diversity" was used in the description of the lack of solitude, as one of the factors considered in the solitude evaluation. Other factors that are evaluated to determine solitude--size, configuration, access points and travel corridors; and the ability of visitors to avoid others in the unit--were also used.

Remoteness alone does not guarantee outstanding opportunities for solitude, however, the insufficient vegetative screening and topographic relief can contribute to a lack of outstanding opportunities. Visitors would have difficulty being alone.

Narrow configuration has been used by the BLM in the inventory in relation to narrow fingers of land that stick out from the main body of a unit. However, configuration is also a factor analyzed in the solitude determination. In this elongated unit, with a maximum of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  - 3 miles from the edge of the unit to the center, it would be difficult for visitors to avoid the presence of others, therefore, the narrow configuration is one of the important factors in determining the lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The limited number of drainages and the low rolling hills in the unit contribute to the ease of travel and good mobility in the unit. Coupled with the size and configuration of the unit this makes it difficult for visitors to avoid others in the unit.

The physical attributes of a unit which can contribute to an outstanding opportunity for primitive recreation include size and configuration, a diversity of landform, a variety of scenic features, the ability to utilize the entire area, and the ability to enjoy supplemental values. In this unit a number of recreation activities can be pursued, however, the narrow configuration of the unit, coupled with the lack of physical features that would be a strong attraction for recreationists, in combination with the lack of scenic features, all contribute to the conclusion that the recreation opportunities within the unit are not outstanding.

\* \* \*

#### DECISION:

No new information was received through public comments that would warrant a change in the decision. Although the unit retains a natural appearance, it does not qualify as a WSA, due to a lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation.











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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